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EUR/ERA SHAWN GRAY,
EEB/TPP/ABT/BTT JACK BOBO,
USTR MELISSA CLARKSON,
USDA/FAS ELIZABETH JONES

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: SLOVAKIA ON GM POLICY: SOLID AT HOME, QUESTIONABLE
AT EU

REF: A. SECSTATE 153542

[1](#)B. BRATISLAVA 542

[1](#)1. (SBU) Poloff discussed reftel A demarche and related biotech issues today with Igor Ferencik, Director of Biosafety at the Ministry of Environment. Ferencik is responsible for drafting both domestic biosafety legislation on genetically modified organisms and recommended positions for Slovakia's votes on GM products within the EU. He has consistently been a strong supporter of liberalizing regulations to enable increased planting of GM crops in Slovakia and the EU.

Domestic GM policy will not change...

[1](#)2. (SBU) Ferencik noted President Sarkozy's proposals with disapproval but was confident that Slovakia would continue to support domestic biotech planting, as required by the EU. Ferencik emphasized that the governing coalition recently approved an amendment, to be submitted to parliament later this month, which would modify Slovakia's 2002 GMO law by reducing administrative obstacles to conducting GM research, among other matters. While Ferencik conceded that the proposal was just a set of technical revisions and would have limited real impact, it was noteworthy that this was the only GM-related legislative remedy that political appointees at the Ministries of Environment and Agriculture asked him to draft this year. Ferencik believes that leading political appointees at his ministry have become increasingly GM-friendly over the past year, most notably State Secretary Dusan Munko from the coalition-leading Smer party, who has strong ties to Prime Minister Robert Fico. (Note: US biotech companies Monsanto and Pioneer are also content with the government's quiet support for biotech, and expect significant increases in Bt corn sales next year. For more information, see reftel B.)

but votes in the EU are another story

[1](#)3. (SBU) Ferencik expressed more concern with Italy's EU proposal for a moratorium on authorizing new biotech products, sensing that it could lead to internal arguments within his ministry and the governing coalition over how to vote in the EU. Last winter, Ferencik's recommendations to vote in the EU against anti-biotech policies in Hungary and Austria were overturned by State Secretary Jaroslav Jadus (HZDS). Ferencik now believes he has enough support from Minister of Environment Jaroslav Izak (SNS) and State Secretary Munko to initiate a serious debate within the

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Ministry over whether Slovakia would simply vote with the EU majority on any potential upcoming EU votes -- including Italy's proposal or a possible resolution regarding France. In the end, however, Ferencik believes that SNS and Smer would prefer to vote with the EU majority while quietly supporting liberalization of GM planting and usage rules in Slovakia's domestic market.

VALLEE